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AUTHOR Ellison, Nolen M.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Minority groups in general and blacks in particular are rapidly losing participation ground in higher education. Minority students are more likely than are other students to drop from the educational pipeline at every level, and are more likely to leave secondary school before graduation, reducing the number of students qualified to apply for college admission. In attempting to help students overcome both personal and structural barriers to higher education, Cuyahoga Community College (CCC) in Ohio has focused primarily on a strategy of inter-institutional articulation, seeking to smooth the transitions which students must make from secondary schools to two-year schools to four-year schools. The major elements of change affected by CCC's articulation approach are curricular improvements, academic and support services, development of student information systems, and enhancement of transfer agreements and opportunities. CCC's Urban Demonstration Model provides an effective theoretical framework for guiding institutional change through: (1) institutional advancement; (2) an orientation toward building educational bridges; (3) a theoretical framework and evaluation model; and (4) clearly defined operational responsibilities. The ultimate goal of this model are the increased effectiveness of CCC's support programs and services. (EJV)

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MAPPING AN INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING THE SUCCESS OF MINORITY STUDENTS

Nolen M. Ellison
President

Janet D. Smith
Assistant Vice President for
Institutional Planning and Research

Robert L. Green
Planning Coordinator
Joint Center for Applied Research in Urban Education

CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Cleveland, Ohio

JC 870 129

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NOLEN M. ELLISON, JANET D. SMITH, ROBERT L. GREEN*

MAPPING AN INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING THE SUCCESS OF MINORITY STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

Minority groups in general and blacks in particular are rapidly losing participation ground in higher education. Minority students are more likely are other students to drop from the educational pipeline at every level. Minority students are more likely to leave secondary school before graduation, dramatically reducing the number of students qualified to apply for college admission. Minority graduates who do enter college are less likely to complete a degree. At every level of education, black students enroll in school or college at lower rates than white students. In 1982, only 58% of 18 to 19 year old youngsters in the black population of the United States were high school graduates, compared to 75% of whites in the same age group (American Council on Education, 1984). Between 1975 and 1982, the percentage of black high school graduates enrolling in college declined from approximately 31.5% to 28% (Watkins, 1985). Additionally, blacks have lost ground relative to non-blacks at each stage of the educational ladder. In 1972, blacks represented 12.7% of all 18 year olds, 10.5% of all high school graduates, 8.7% of all college freshmen. Four years later, only 6.5% of all bachelor degree recipients were black. By 1979, blacks represented only about

*
- Nolen M. Ellison is President, Cuyahoga Community College.
- Janet D. Smith is Assistant Vice President for Institutional Planning and Research at Cuyahoga Community College.
- Robert L. Green is the Planning Coordinator of Cuyahoga Community College's Joint Center for Applied Research in Urban Education.

4% of all professional and doctoral recipients (American Council on Education, 1984).

For over two decades, Cuyahoga Community College (CCC) has responded to the dilemma of educational access and opportunity for urban and minority students. The efforts of the College have resulted in measurable success, but the institution also acknowledges that much of the challenge still remains to be met.

In attempting to help students overcome both personal and structural barriers to higher education, Cuyahoga Community College has focused primarily on a strategy of inter-institutional articulation. This strategy seeks to smooth the transitions students must make from secondary schools to two-year schools to four year schools. The major elements of change affected by Cuyahoga Community College's articulation approach are curricular improvements, academic and student support services, development of student information systems and enhancement of transfer agreements and opportunities.

As it began its third decade, Cuyahoga Community College established a five year strategy (1984-89) to improve educational access, opportunity and success for students seeking associate and baccalaureate degrees. Each element of this effort was designed to operate within the context of Cuyahoga Community College's overall strategic planning and institutional development framework.

Thus, on October 1, 1984, the College established a Center for Articulation and Transfer Opportunities (CATO). The Center's mandates were to provide institution-wide leadership, coordination, evaluation, policy research and reporting services, particularly as they relate to enhancement of articulation

and transfer opportunities.

During 1986, Cuyahoga Community College further recognized a need to take full advantage of its rapidly growing programs and resources related to improving the education of young people before and during post-secondary education. What was needed was a more effective theoretical framework that would provide a "map" for the College's longitudinal strategy for institutional change. The recently documented Urban Demonstration Model addresses that need. It describes a theoretical context for the College's coordinated efforts to facilitate high school to college transitions; improve student retention and academic achievement; and facilitate two-year to four-year college transfer.

Cuyahoga Community College's Urban Demonstration Model also provides an institutional framework for evaluations and analyses designed to assess the accomplishment of goals for both program outcomes and institutional change.

The Urban Demonstration Model was developed as a collaborative and aggressive strategy for effective schooling in a large urban area. It addresses the College's acknowledgement that, to ensure the success of large groups of minority students in two-year colleges, an institution must develop a strategy that is clearly tied to a collegewide sense of purpose and priority. The model delineates a set of theoretical principles, the expected outcomes, institutional structure and operational responsibilities involved in such an undertaking. A graphic presentation of these elements is presented in Appendix A.

The decision to launch a full-fledged and highly coordinated model to enhance minority student success is grounded in some fundamental premises. These are

summarized below:

- Consistent with its mission and philosophy, an institution must undertake change to improve minority student success in a way that is clearly understood and reflected as a strategy for overall institutional advancement.

- Effective strategy requires that cooperative relationships be developed with urban high schools and four-year colleges and universities in the interest of students who will enter and exit at these levels of the educational continuum.

- A clear definition and well-understood theoretical framework (including expected outcomes and evaluation measures) must govern the development of efforts to effect both short and long term institutional change.

- Executive leadership is an important key to institutional change. However, in the absence of singular line reporting relationships, clearly defined structural relationships and accountability structures are required.

The strategies for the Urban Demonstration Model are summarizedd below within the context of these premises.

1. Institutional Change Through Institutional Advancement

As has traditionally been the case in community colleges, approximately

fifty six percent (56%) of minority students who attend post-secondary institutions begin by enrolling in a two-year college (Grant, 1982). If they are highly committed to the success of these students, such institutions can best serve minorities because they offer high quality, accessible and affordable educational opportunities and services. They also offer university transfer, technical and lifelong learning programs designed to promote individual development.

To enhance the effectiveness with which the two-year college can accomplish its basic mission, it is essential that the institution undertake deliberate efforts to attract and retain larger numbers of minority students, and to provide opportunities which increase the likelihood of their educational success. The goals of institutional advancement through such a strategy must also be clearly agreed upon within the College. For Cuyahoga Community College, such goals include:

- The development of a cadre of well prepared students who enroll in the College's program and services;

- An increased number of students who graduate from urban high schools and continue on to higher education;

- A concrete demonstration of the College's commitment to improving the life preparation of youth in the urban community;

- Improvement of the overall teaching-learning environment and image of urban schools; and,

- Development and refinement of a model for improving urban schools which may be applied to other higher education institutions.

In short, access, institutional commitment, opportunity and standards for student performance are important touchstones for developing and advancing the institution.

2. Institutional Change Through An Orietnation Toward Building Educational Bridges

The challenges which face urban schools are not unique to specific levels of education. Inadequate preparation in basic skills, high attrition rates, and economic hardships which detract from educational participation and academic performance -- all of these challenge the effectiveness of high schools, as well as two- and four-year colleges. Design of feasible career paths for students requires that bridge programs of learning and support services also be developed. Such programs must begin as soon as possible after students enter high school and must continue through the completion of their educational goals.

A two-plus-two-plus-two approach to curriculum ladders and individualized educational planning represents an important change in the professional orientation of staff at all levels. This should be supplemented by long term financial aid planning and strategic use of personal, academic and career support options. The development of such an orientation is particularly crucial in the two-year college environment.

The nature of cooperative planning which must be carried out between and

among faculty, counselors, and administrators must come to be seen as an important and usual means of doing business at all three levels. Formal articulation agreements, however detailed and specific their content, are dependent for their success on the bridges which serve to reduce discontinuity and dissappointments as students move from one level of education to another.

3. Institutional Change Through A Theoretical Framework and Evaluation Model

The purpose of any theory or framework is to establish a sense of order around which objectives for accomplishing relevant outcomes can be developed. Because institutional change to improve student success requires that coherence be created from seemingly disparate functions in structurally different areas, such a sense of order is particularly important. It provides the pegs on which to hang each activity and simultaneously describes the contribution of each objective. A theoretical framework also serves to define a set of institutional outcomes against which the implementation of plans can be evaluated. Decisions concerning program modification, resource allocation and the placement of institutional responsibilities are also facilitated.

In the case of Cuyahoga Community College, "effective schools" theory provides the beginning framework around which to organize programmatic efforts to increase opportunities and improve the likelihood of educational success among minority students. Through extensive faculty and administrative discussions, program review and analysis and thorough review of the effective schools literature, this theoretical model is being modified and expanded to meet the needs of both high school and community

college students. Much of the research, evaluation and writing on effective schools in the past has focused on student achievement at the elementary and middle school levels. Cuyahoga Community College is providing national leadership in the application of this theory at the high school and community college levels.

In addition to presenting academic credibility, this theory is also sufficiently inclusive and adaptable to accommodate the broad range of objectives which are required to improve institutional effectiveness. The factors which have been shown to distinguish effective from ineffective schools, and are adapted below as the theoretical framework for Cuyahoga Community College's Urban Demonstration Model are the following:

- A statement of school mission that is clearly defined, communicated to, and understood by its public as well as by its administrators, teachers and students.

- An emphasis on school-community relations (parents, businesses, civic organizations) that is required for cooperative planning implementation and support of educational programs. This exemplifies and communicates to students the mission and purpose of schools, the expectations of exemplary performance, the nature of teacher support that is available to assure such performance and the individual's responsibility for learning.

- An emphasis on academic foundations that is associated with students' ability to read, write, compute and process information with a minimum level of difficulty.

- A school learning climate that cultivates respect and mutually trusting relationships among students, teachers and administrators in a manner that enhances student learning.

- Strong and effective leadership, particularly in the instructional and student support domains. Such leadership confers with and advises teachers and students about learning outcomes and assures prompt solutions to enhance support for the school.

- High expectations are grounded on a belief that all students can achieve well beyond their current levels, and that student learning is a responsibility shared by both teachers and learners. Teachers are expected to provide high quality instruction, and to maintain high standards of learning. Students are expected to function at the highest motivational, perserverance and capability levels, and to accept personal responsibility for their performance.

- Continuous instructional assessment and feedback that are used to motivate students as well as to form the basis of corrective action. The objectives of instruction, along with the level of skills, knowledge and competencies which students are expected to learn must be clearly understood by each student.

The theoretical principles described above will be assessed in terms of their applicability to instructional and support programs jointly or separately designed and administered by Cuyahoga Community College, other cooperating colleges and universities, and urban public high schools in Northeastern Ohio.

4. Institutional Change Through Clearly Defined Operational Responsibilities

The leadership challenge in accomplishing the objectives of the institutional change model are identical to those which result in any changes in policies, procedures or practices within an institution. Such leadership must reflect a clear understanding of the institution's commitment to minority student success and the strategies by which it aims to operationalize this commitment. It must also understand the process of moving from strategy to implementation. Thus, the development of detailed plans, and the clear definition of operational leadership and responsibility are important factors.

Initiated as a key institutional priority by the President, the executive leadership of Cuyahoga Community College's Urban Demonstration Model rests with two key offices -- Institutional Planning and Research and Institutional Development. Operational staff with key responsibility for accomplishing the objectives of the Model are provided an opportunity to fully understand the strategy and theoretical framework for institutional change; to plan for the implementation of programs which contribute to the goals of the Model; and to participate in the development of criteria and strategies to be used in evaluating program outcomes. Key faculty and administrative leaders participate in planning meetings in which the premises, expectations, outcomes and theoretical model are fully discussed.

Open communication is also maintained with, and presentations made to the college community on current or planned programs that are consistent with agreed-upon guidelines related to the mission, institutional goals, expectations, outcomes and (ultimately) student success of the Urban

Demonstration Model.

In summary, Cuyahoga Community College's programs and services which seek to improve the access and success of urban and minority students are designed, implemented and evaluated within the operational context of those units charged with ongoing responsibility for such functions. This ultimately assures that activities will be modified in such a manner as to continually effect changes designed to improve the success of minority students. This is the ultimate goal of Cuyahoga Community College's Urban Demonstration Model -- the increased effectiveness of the College's support programs and services through the institutionalization of the objectives of programs defined within the Model.

Through the success of the Model, Cuyahoga Community College will address a range of major social and economic problems which face the urban communities of Northeastern Ohio. Educated young adults are in a position to be productive citizens, community leaders, and effective and responsible parents. Thus, the ultimate outcomes of the College's commitment to the success of its urban and minority students will be the increased stability of the personal, economic and family lives of its neighbors and constituents.

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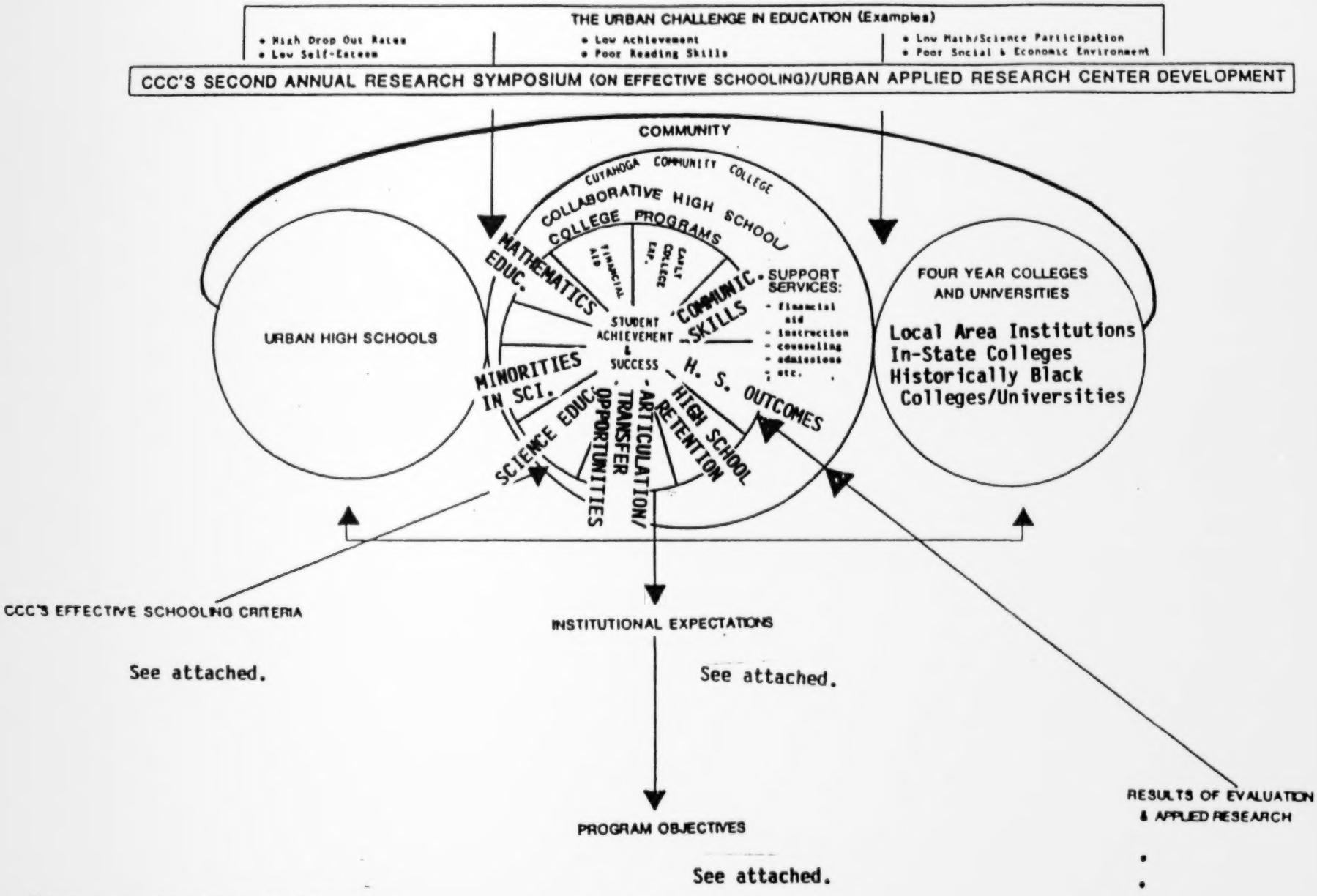
APPENDIX A

CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S URBAN DEMONSTRATION MODEL - A COLLABORATIVE AND AGGRESSIVE STRATEGY FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING IN URBAN AREAS

CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S URBAN DEMONSTRATION MODEL - A Collaborative and Aggressive Strategy for Effective Schooling in Urban Areas



Phase I - Urban Demonstration Model
Phase II - CCC Support Programs and Services
Modification & Institutionalization of Phase I Objectives

CCC'S EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING CRITERIA

School Learning Climate
High Expectations
Instructional Leadership
Clear School Mission
Academic Foundation
Assessment & Feedback
School-Community Relations

INSTITUTIONAL EXPECTATIONS (Examples)

Employer Satisfaction with graduate performance
Clear definitions of student outcomes upon graduation from high school
Shorter time to completion of two-year college program
Improved student self-expectation
Improved likelihood of academic/college prep program selection
Increased number of minority students enrolled in higher education
Strengthened basic college entry skills
Improved student retention at two-year level
Increased number of urban students in math, science, engineering, health and other science fields
Improved preparation of faculty (college and high school) for teaching urban youth
Improved positive expectation of faculty who teach with urban youth

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES (Examples)

To develop 2+2+2 curricula ladders in voc-tech, transfer, and science areas
To develop and maintain Individual Education Plans for high school and college students
To develop and implement two- to four-year college transfer agreements
To instruct 9th - 12th graders in basic and other college readiness skills
To implement a professional and peer mentorship program for students
To provide detailed financial information and planning assistance to students relative to their educational plans
To establish and enforce appropriate academic standards and expectations for faculty and student performance
To provide for faculty (high school & college) enrichment in math and science education

Many objectives are directly related to "effective schools" Theory and Practices (i.e., leadership, assessment, basic skills, expectations and climate)

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